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1913

Year Book of the
Brothers of the
Book. [Chicago]

THE HISTORICAL SURVEY

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1913

YEAR BOOK
OF THE
BROTHERS OF THE BOOK

1913

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY



YEAR BOOK

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YEAR BOOK
OF THE
BROTHERS OF THE BOOK

1913



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BROTHERS OF THE BOOK
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RULES OF THE ORDER

I

The name of this order is Brothers of the Book.

II

The purpose of the order is the encouragement of bookish good-fellowship, and the occasional publication of a worthy book.

III

The management of the order is vested in the Council, which consists of the Scrivener, the Artificer, the Archivist, the Scribes, the Limners, and the Arbiters.

IV

The Council is augmented each year from amongst those of the brethren who are most active in the work of the order.

V

The Scrivener and the Artificer have charge of the making of the books comprising the publications of the order, notify the brethren regarding forthcoming publications, and maintain the correspondence incident thereto.

VI

The Archivist has in his keeping the books, manuscripts, and other treasures of the order, guards the seal and keeps the chronicles of the brotherhood.

VII

The Scribes and the Limners are elected to the Council from amongst those of the brethren whose good works are set forth in the publications of the brotherhood.

VIII

The Arbiters are elected to the Council from amongst those of the brethren who lend their counsel and advice toward the furtherance of the aims of the brotherhood.

IX

The Brethren comprise Idealists, Poets, Dreamers, Bards, Artists, Collectors, Players, and Craftsmen, all of whom are chosen from amongst good bookish people.

X

The publications of the Brothers of the Book are exclusively for the members of the order, who are, however, under no obligation to subscribe for issues except as they individually so elect.

XI

The initiation fee in the order is two dollars. The brethren also pay yearly dues of one dollar to cover the cost of year books and membership certificates, and to meet the expenses, clerical and otherwise, incident to the printing and mailing of announcements. The dues are payable each year upon publication of the year book.

XII

And now let it be well and truly known, that no Destroyer of Ideals, no Disturber of Visions, and no Inconoclast of any kind shall ever be counted as one of the BROTHERS OF THE BOOK.

A Chapter on

IDEALS

Wherein the Artificer writes of the principles which guide the Scrivener and himself in the preparation of publications intended for the interest and pleasure of the Brothers of the Book.

IT is difficult to express concretely any true ideal, that being of the spirit, which is incommunicable; but perhaps a description of some of our methods, reasons, and results, may suggest the vision which we strive to follow. And, to make more clear the motives which actuate this organization, it seems well to offer a brief history of its inception.

In that wonderful decade, the 'nineties, which was characterized by a renaissance of all the arts, no one form of endeavor profited more notably in access of ideals and achievements than the printed book. Literary expression grew in grace and beauty, and methods of illustrative and decorative treatment received many interesting impulses, but the improvements in typographical arrangement were especially noteworthy. For many years previous to that period, there were few printers who made any effort to instill harmony, dignity, and beauty into the printed page, but the influence of the many who strove for better forms of expres-

sion during the 'nineties established standards which have stimulated a marked improvement in the productions of all progressive printers since.

It is, perhaps, an open question whether the more delicate and elaborate cutting of literary gems demanded added grace in their settings, or the construction of finer typographical altars encouraged the creation of worthier gods of expression for installation thereon. It is quite possible, also, that no such question exists, for in our memory all the arts and crafts went hand in hand along the high road of endeavor and accomplishment. The pioneers of the changes then effected were, of necessity, extremists, but all honor is granted to those great spirits who, 'born out of their due time,' still 'strove to set the crooked straight.' For even the most extreme of their theories were based upon definite ideals, while many of their disciples, wandering far afield, chose rather to follow eccentricities and mannerisms than to study the fundamental principles involved. How shifting were the sands upon which those followers built is evidenced by the evanescence of their productions. Of all the private presses which sprang up, 'abode their little hour or two, and went their way,' almost none proved to be more than a passing indication of youthful enthusiasm; almost none is remembered except as one discovers,

on dusty shelves, an occasional erratic (and sometimes erotic) little volume of weird typography. Of the few workers who founded their endeavors upon taste and discrimination, and accomplished worthy results, nearly all have grown or drifted into other fields, so there is now an extremely limited number who have maintained an active interest in this form of artistic production, or have come back to it after a period of inactivity.

Among the latter is Laurence C. Woodworth, Scrivener of the Brothers of the Book, who is now continuing the work which he began in 1898. Impelled by a keen appreciation of beauty in books, he made a study of printing processes, and applied them to the production of dignified and conservative forms. His discriminating taste in literary selections is best evidenced by the list of those early publications given later in this year book. They were issued from Gouverneur, New York (then the home of the Scrivener), during the years 1898 to 1901, and comprised twelve titles, all of which have long since been out of print. These issues were keenly appreciated by collectors, and a complete set is now very rare.

(It may be of passing interest to note that, at about the same time the Scrivener was finding his work and laying the foundation of the present organization, in northern New York, the Artificer was making some

small attempts on the Pacific Coast, though he must admit that they were of the ephemeral type of individualism run riot already mentioned.)

The Scrivener followed the typical plan of privately printed editions, and, as he preferred to submerge his own individuality, he chose the title of BROTHERS OF THE BOOK for his title-page imprint. This indicated an association of kindred spirits who enjoyed his efforts, and while there was, at that time, no definite organization such as has since been formed, the basic principle of fellowship was the same, and it is on that principle that the Brothers of the Book is founded.

After the early years of endeavor, business activities and the wane of public interest combined to interfere with continued publishing efforts, but the bookish enthusiasm remained. So, in the Spring of 1912, Opportunity presided at the renaissance of that '*vita nova*' which is ours who live with books and ideals. At that time the plan of permanent organization was devised, the Council established, and membership offered to those who manifest a spirit of accord with the rules and activities of the order. The association has received marked recognition among those who know and love good books, and has grown steadily in numbers, as witness the lists of council and members.

Coming now to a consideration of our ideals, the following statements present our theories and desires, most of which, by force of circumstance, have never been fully met. That being granted, there remain unlimited opportunities for future accomplishment.

The selection of literary matter for our publications is largely decided by the Scrivener's personal taste. The early issues were an expression of his bookish enthusiasm, and, as such, were individual in their intention and development. The same plan obtains in the present organization. The subject-matter of the publications is *unlimited* in scope, and may range from the light and frivolous to the serious and important—but always must pass the test of being distinctly *worth while*. There is no desire to attach undue emphasis to literary style, *per se*, and it is quite certain that our publications will never be issued as propaganda of any theory or 'movement.' Choice tends toward such items as express a kindly graciousness, a fantastic delicacy, or a spirit of clever fooling. Preference attaches to original work by members of the brotherhood, with an occasional reprint when some worthy subject is brought to light, the desire being to seek in the byways of literature for those 'little things' of literary excellence which are enjoyed by the few.

In selecting materials and arranging typographical details, we aim to present the spirit of the writing in a simple, appropriate form. Obviously, the first requisite of any book is that it shall be easily and conveniently read. Any volume which is lacking in either of these essentials falls just so far short of perfect beauty. All the details which create the form of a book should balance and harmonize with each other and with the subject, so that the volume is a unit, rather than a collection of parts. Those details are so closely related, and their influence, each upon all, so exacting, that their combination must be guided by a comprehensive plan of treatment. Sometimes this is suggested by a national or historical quality in the literary matter, or a certain period may be indicated. When there is not a definite impulse of that nature, arrangement becomes a matter of individual interpretation. For example, *The Squire's Recipes* reflects the period of the original volume, or, if that original be questioned, the time and place in which it was supposed to have been printed. Differently, in *Peter and the Fairies*, the delicacy of theme and treatment is expressed in size, shape, and binding, with a simple type- and page-arrangement.

The close relation of details makes it difficult to consider them separately, though each has its own points of interest. The

paper used in our publications is invariably hand-made, not for the mere fact that it is made by hand, but because that process and the excellent materials used insure its permanency. Also the aesthetic qualities of its surface and texture are peculiarly attractive. Upon the selection of paper depends the size and shape of the volume, which are naturally influenced by the amount of matter to be included, and the form of page most appropriate. (It is our usual fate to desire a size and shape which cannot be derived from any available size of paper, and we suffer recurrent disappointments when we may only approximate the exact measurements that seem most desirable.) Color and texture, also, often play an important part in carrying out a scheme of interpretation.

The choice of type is at once the most important and most difficult of all the questions involved. The first requisite is legibility. The fact that words are printed to be read demands that they be presented in a form easiest for reading. Some type-faces, in which each letter is graceful, when considered alone, are readable only by more or less effort when combined in a solid page. Notable examples of these are the text- or black-letter forms, and, in somewhat less degree, those designs which show a marked contrast between extra heavy major strokes and unduly thinned minor lines.

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Experiment and custom have proven the lighter faces of Roman letter to be more generally satisfactory under all reading conditions. Of these, we consider most desirable the Caslon design and the form known as French Oldstyle. Some of the more modern types are not exactly undesirable, but they lack the freedom and graceful proportions of the earlier patterns. The Caslon letter is unquestionably satisfactory for any page, and its use is always acceptable. French Oldstyle, on the other hand, while never objectionable, is, because of its grace and delicacy of form and proportion, peculiarly appropriate for matter which is marked by a discriminative literary style. Black-letter is, by the very principles of its design, not easily read, and therefore is seldom used, except for 'page-appearance,' which will be mentioned later, or to indicate a mediaeval quality. In brotherhood publications it has consistently been avoided, with the exception of our latest issue, *The Vision of Anton*, where availability and the period of the tale combined to suggest its use. But that suggestion, plausible as it was, would have received scant consideration if the story had been longer, so that eyes would have tired before the end.

Page-arrangement has been the subject of much study, and there have been some attempts to establish fixed rules, with only

partial success. The arrangement of every book is a separate problem, which can be solved only by the application of general principles and good taste to that particular case. Pages may not be planned singly, but in pairs, since it is the open book in the hand which must be considered. The inner margins should be as narrow as may be without carrying the edge of the type-page into the curve of the back, so that the eye need travel only the shortest possible distance from the bottom of one page to the top of the next. The bottom margin should be large enough to allow the thumb to hold the book securely without covering any words. The top and side margins adjust themselves naturally, by the exercise of taste, to fair proportions with the others, as established. The measurements of these margins, and their relation to the paper- and type-pages, are properly relative to the color value of the type-page and the shape of the paper-page, the sizes of each also being factors. By 'color value' is meant the average gray produced by the combination of black letters on white paper, within the boundaries of the type-page. To a craftsman in typography, there is a certain temptation toward the use of black-letter, for the one reason that a solid type-page of heavy color value makes a beautiful *appearance* when carefully placed on a well-proportioned page. But the stand-

ard of legibility, so necessary in selecting a type-face, obtains in this as well, and we believe that no one is justified in sacrificing that legibility for the sake of appearance.

Selection and arrangement of binding material and form are largely matters of individual taste. It is sometimes logical to indicate a contemporary binding, when the content makes a definite suggestion. This has already been mentioned in connection with *The Squire's Recipes*. For *Peter and the Fairies*, however, the selection of binding was entirely an aesthetic matter.

It has been the intention, in this article, to avoid technicalities, to convey some information of what we have done, and how, and why, and perhaps to suggest some of our hopes for the future. These aspirations are too many to mention, but chiefest of them is a desire that the publications to come may bring to the Brothers of the Book some of the keen interest and pleasure that is ours in their making.

WILL RANSOM

Artificer

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made paper covered boards, 1913. \$1.

BROCHURES

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For the ninety-first anniversary of the birth of
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meeting of the Omar Khayyam Club of America,
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paper wrappers, 1912. *Out of print.*

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WILD and BERT LESTON TAYLOR. With sketches
by F. FOX, and decorations by WILL RANSOM.
Printed on Van Gelder hand-made paper, in wrappers,
1912. 25¢.

THE VISION OF ANTON, WALTER A. DYER. With
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of Toby Rubovits, on Van Gelder hand-made paper,
in French charcoal paper wrappers, 1914. 25¢.

YEAR BOOK FOR 1913. Containing a list of the
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hand-made paper, in wrappers, 1914.

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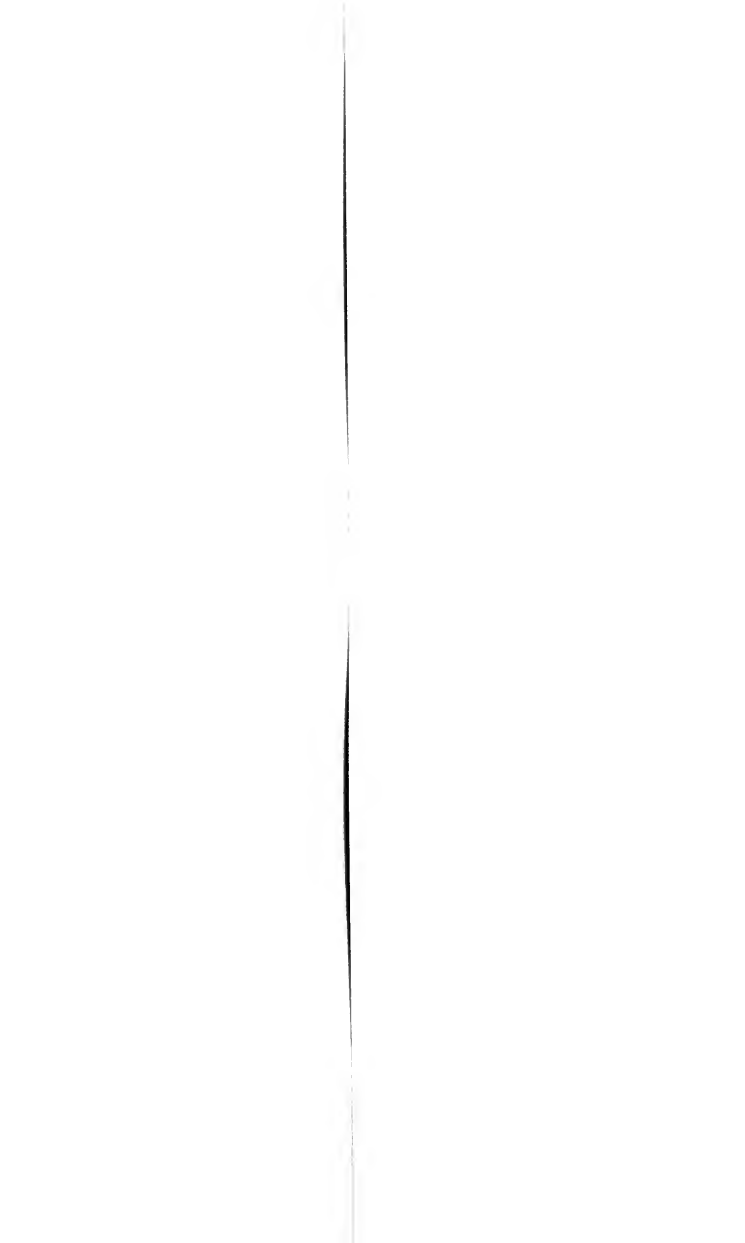
T. N. Foulis

HERE ends this Year Book, devised and written by
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Incipit Vita Nova





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